

12-1-2015

## After the Levees Broke

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### Recommended Citation

Wessels, Christian (2015) "After the Levees Broke," *Gandy Dancer Archives*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 1 , Article 17.  
Available at: <https://knight scholar.geneseo.edu/gandy-dancer/vol4/iss1/17>

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Ma warned me to cool  
my nerves when I saw him.  
I thought *He's more hound  
than gator, more levee  
than bayou*. In the emergency  
room, she carried me down  
into the marshlands. When  
our names had been made  
into a list, we waited hours  
to meet him at the north end  
of the bog. I was dehydrated—  
I took off my T-shirt, my sandals.  
I thought a mosquito to be  
a sparrow, a bullfrog to be  
a kitten—his name was called.  
We made our way upstream  
on a low-power air boat,  
catching glimpses of children  
drowned in the silted mud,  
lovers lying still at the shore  
with fevers only a few degrees  
warmer than the air, bodies  
with crawdads pulling at their  
ears. The treble of our slow

move forward was all I could  
hear. Behind a homing thunder  
storm, near sunset, Ma cut  
the engine and carried me  
off the boat, into the bed  
of reeds. With those canes  
and stalks around me, I looked  
down past their roots. I saw  
Pop there, lying with his eyes  
closed, waiting for the sun  
to finally bleed itself dry,  
the nighttime air to turn cold.